

ACHEH,  
COMMONLY CALLED ACHEEN.

BY  
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IN perusing the following account of Acheh, I trust your readers will accept it for what it is meant to be, namely, a brief compilation of notes regarding the country as I found it.

Acheh is the correct name of that part of Sumatra extending from Tamiang Point on the East to Trûmûn on the West Coast, though it is commonly, but erroneously, known to Europeans as Acheen.

VALENTYN, however, writing as long ago as 1688, has exposed this misnomer. It is derived from the Hindustani word *Achai* meaning fine, or lovely, and is so called on account of the exclamation alleged to have been uttered by the first visitors from India on sighting the coast in general and Kampong Pandei in particular. This place, situated on the Acheh river, and not far from Kota Raja, is remarkable for a grove of enormous trees of great beauty. In describing the land and what they saw, we may presume this epithet *Achai* was so repeatedly used, that people came to speak of the newly discovered country as *Nègri Achai*. This visit must have been paid centuries back, at any rate long before the Islam religion was introduced into the country; for we find the name recurring in the "Undang Undang" or laws and customs of Menangkabau, promulgated by Perpâti Sëbâtang, and collected and transcribed by Mr. VAN OPHUYZEN.

In them mention is made of the marriage of one of the Menangkabau princesses with a royal prince of Acheh. I may add

that it was this marriage which gave rise to the Malay "Âdat Mengaku," which enacts that the bridegroom should be brought to the house of the bride, and never *vice versâ*.

Another legend has it, that a Hindû princess having one day disappeared, was found by her brother in Sumatra. On their meeting, he told the natives that she was his *Achi*, or sister. She was afterwards elected Queen, and hence this name was given to the country. This seems a very plausible story, and it is worthy of notice that the Hindû practice of piercing and largely distending the lobes of the ears, is prevalent up to this day among Achinese women; this custom is naturally attributed to the above-named princess.

I have also heard it alleged, that the name *Achai*, or *Acheh*, is derived from a species of leech, striped dark and light brown, small but vicious, which abounds in the jungle along the West Coast of Sumatra.

Although Acheh, as we generally understand it, represents the whole of that portion of North Sumatra from a line drawn across between Tamiang and Trûmûn to Acheh or Acheen Head, yet its people only occupy the land bordering the sea as far inland as the high ranges of hills, which skirt the coast at some places along the North and West, and at times run parallel with it, at a distance varying from five to twenty miles, converging at Acheen Head.

The land between these ranges consists of high plateaus or steppes, intersected by mountains which stretch continuously throughout the whole length of Sumatra, and are not inaptly termed by the Malays "Gunong Barisan." It is occupied by the two hill tribes Gayûs and Allas, the Battaks occupying the highlands further South. Outwardly these mountains resemble, in every respect, other ranges in the East, being thickly covered with jungle. Though I know of no active volcanoes among them, their formation is distinctly volcanic. Chief among their peaks are the "Golden Mountain" or "Mount Ophir," the "Orphan" or

"Selawa Betina," "Gunong Batu Mukûra," "Bukit Gapuh," "Elephant Hill" or "Bukit Pûdada," "Gunong Chûnda," "Bukit Pasei," "Table Hill," Bukits "Tamiang," "Tamsei," and "Gompang," and "Gunong Abong." With one or two exceptions, these rise to a height of from 7,000 to 11,000 feet.

The country is fairly watered by a number of small rivers, streams, and creeks, the majority and the more important of which have their outlet on the North and East Coasts, those flowing into the Indian Ocean being more or less insignificant. The largest are the Kuâla Acheh, Kuâla Pasangan, Kuâla Jambu Ayer, Kuâla Perlak, and Kuâla Tamiang, which all form deltas or lagoons at their outlets. At ordinary times their depth is nothing to speak of, but when heavy rains have fallen up-country the volume of water they have to discharge is such that *banjirs*, or floods, ensue, which doubtless first led the people to build their huts on piles. At the mouths of these rivers one invariably finds a shallow bar, with a high surf running over it, and, by choosing that part where the least surf exists, you can best hit upon the entrance to the river. Unfortunately this is otherwise puzzling to find, for with every monsoon it varies its position, the entrance being at one time from the North, at another from the South, and as the land along the East Coast is undergoing a gradual but continual upheaval, numerous and sharp turnings of the rivers are formed.

Of the Geology of the country, I can but speak in a general way; gold, tin, and iron are met with on the West Coast, while sulphur is plentiful in Pûlau Way, and petroleum in Pasangan and along the North Coast.

Regarding its Botany, with my imperfect knowledge, I can only assert that I noticed no strange trees, except the Ba-Tchut or Batang Tchut, of the wood of which the Achinèse make the sheaths of their *sakêins*; it is a graceful tree, with dark green velvety leaves, small white flowers, and a seed consisting of a long sharp-pointed pod containing a cottony substance. A shrub growing

along the sea shore, likewise new to me, also has a pod like the *nam-nam* fruit, full of this cottony substance. Palms are numerous. Among flowers, I have come across the jasmine, but have only met with two sorts of orchids, namely a species of *cerides* and the so-called "pigeon orchid."

Of the animal kingdom, Acheh possesses specimens in common with the rest of Sumatra, from the one-horned rhinoceros to the white ant or *rauges*.

As regards its climate, it is under the influence of the N. E. and S. W. monsoons, being most unhealthy during the periods of the changes of monsoon. The heat during the day is about the same as in Singapore, generally, however, tempered by a strong breeze, especially in Acheh Bësar; the nights, and more particularly the early mornings, are delightfully cool; but these very breezes too often bring on fever and other ailments.

In describing the country, it will, on political grounds, be best to divide it into the following districts, namely:—The (1) East Coast; (2) North-East Coast; (3) West Coast; and (4) Acheh Bësar (Acheen Proper).

The East Coast extends from Tamiang to Diamond Point, and comprises the following States (I give them in the order in which they extend along the coast from Tamiang northwards), viz.:—Mënjapahit, Langsar, Birim, Bayan, Sungei Raya, Perlak, Pedawa Bësar, Pedawa Këchil, Idi Bësar, Idi Tchut or Këchil, Bugging Bayan, Glûmpang, Jûrûlu or Jûlot, Tanjong Sëmantoh, and Simpang Olim.

At the head of each of these States, we find a Raja, each at one time or other a self-made and self-styled ruler, without a drop of royal blood in his veins. The exact dates and origin of these

Settlements, though comparatively recent, I cannot state, but they all owe their existence to immigration from other and older States, such as Pidir, Gighen, Pasei, and especially Tëlok Semoy or Sëmawei. The most powerful or influential of the immigrants either usurped or was given the position of Chief or Headman over the new Settlement, and the offspring of such chiefs or headmen have subsequently acquired the high-sounding title of Raja. Of the above named States, the most important and flourishing at the present day is Idi, comprising Idi Bësar and Idi Këchil.

The North-East Coast extends from Diamond Point to Pidir or Pedro Point, and comprises the following States :—Kerti, Gëdongo, Pasei, Tëlok Semoy or Sëmawei, extending to Krûng Kûkûs, Pasangan with its subsidiary States Klumpang Dua and Blang Panjang, lying between Krûng Kûkûs, and Kuâla Jûmpa, Pûdadu, Samalanga, separated by the Kuâla Olim from Merdû, then Tringading, Rantei Panjang, Ujong, Ayer Labu, Gighen, backed by Kemangan, whence it derived its race of rulers, and finally Pidir, which stretches from Kuâla Pekan Bharu, one of the mouths forming the Pidir Delta, to Pidir Point.

Of all the Rajas of the above-named States, the only one having royal blood in his veins is the Tunku Maharaja of Tëlok Sëmawei, who formerly held sway over the several States along the East Coast, acting as the Wakil of the Sultan in collecting the tribute paid by them. The house of Pidir, which State at one time was of considerable importance, is connected to the Royal family only by marriage.

By Acheh Bësar, or Acheh Proper, is understood that corner of Sumatra formed by a line drawn from Pidir Point on the North to Kuâla Lambesi on the West Coast.

Proceeding thence South we have along the coast the following States :—Lambesi, Bubu Awêh, Naw or Nôh, Tëlok Kruit, Pati, Ranûng, Rigas, Ketapan Pasei or Krung Sabeh, Ranga, Tënúng, Waylah or Wulah, Bubun, Analabu or Malabu, Senagun,

Trang, Tadu, Tripa, Simangan (which last eight named recognize at present one chief ruler—the Raja KŪJŪRUAN CHI, residing at Analaboe), Kuâla Batu, Pûlau Kayû, Sûsû, Labinan Haji, Mûki, Têlok Tampat Tûan, and Trumun.

We now come to the smallest, yet most ancient and interesting, division of Acheh—Acheh Bësar, or Acheen Proper. It is so called, because it forms the chief seat of Government, and contains the capital of this once famous Sultanate or Empire.

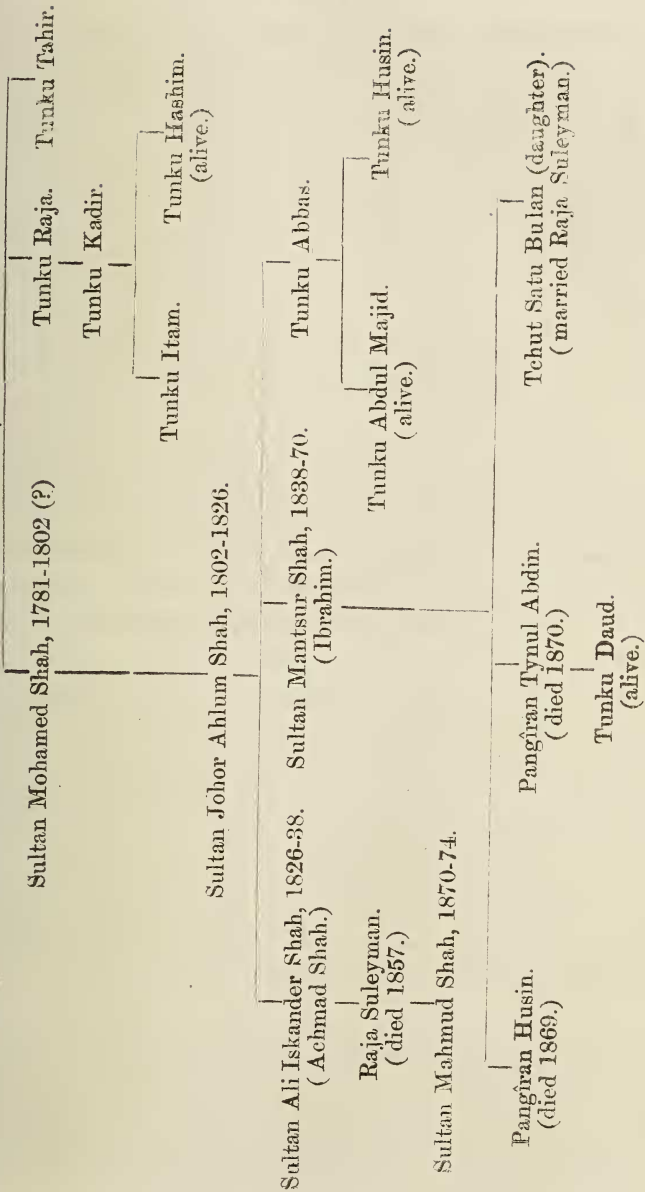
Though I have only given the boundaries of Acheh, as they existed in 1873, its dominion at one time comprised the whole of the East Coast, together with the kingdom of Siak, while, as late as 1652, the whole of the West Coast, including Padang, was subject to it. Later on, however, as its power lessened, and that of the subordinate Chiefs increased, the tribute was often irregularly paid in to the treasury, and the authority held over the more remote States became merely nominal; it is not, therefore, a matter for wonder that these Rajas finally threw off the yoke, allied themselves with their more powerful neighbours, and declared for liberty.

While at this time wars on a large scale were carried on by the Portuguese of Malacca in Kedah, Pêrak, Johor, and other States in the Malayan Peninsula, the Sultan of Acheh was possessed of no means of chastising such turbulent petty rulers.

Acheh saw the zenith of its glory and power under Sultan Merhoum DARÛ SALAM, otherwise known as ISKANDER MÛDA, who ruled between 1606 and 1641. To follow its history minutely prior and subsequent to that date, would be beyond the scope of these notes; I can, therefore, only refer my readers to such works as VALENTYN, CRAWFURD, ANDERSON, and VETH.

Suffice it for us to know that there have been four dynasties—a Hindû, a Malay from Menangkabau, an Acheh, and an Arabic dynasty; the last named beginning with Sultan MAHMUD SHAH, who ruled from 1760 to 1781. His descendants are traced out in the accompanying genealogical tree.

Sultan MAHMUD SHAH, 1760-81.





These Sultans lived at Kota Raja, or the Kraton, as it is called, being lords of certain crown lands as well as of the four Misjids, viz., Misjid Raja, close to the Kraton; Misjid Indrapura in the Sagi of XXV. Mukims; Misjid Indraputra in the Sagi of XXVI. Mukims; and Misjid Indraputra in the Sagi of XXII. Mukims. These temples were and still are the only recognised places of coronation. The object in having more than one such place of coronation is that, if one fell into the hands of the enemy, or anything happened to the Raja, another place in one of the Sagis would be at hand; where the ceremony of crowning the newly chosen Raja could be properly performed; were it to be held elsewhere, the coronation would be deemed invalid.

Besides the crown lands, Acheh Proper is divided into the three above-named Sagis, whose present Chiefs are respectively Tükû ABBAS, Tükû TCHÛT LAMBUNG, Tükû Muda TCHÛT BANTA and Panglima PULIM. While speaking of Tükûs, it should be remarked that this is the title of a Chief or Noble in Acheh Proper, a Tunku being a well-to-do person as well as a learned man or school-master; at Pidir these two titles signify just the reverse.

The Sagis are again subdivided into Mukims, or districts possessing a Misjid, as denoted by their number, viz., that of XXV. into 9, 6, 4, and 3 Mukims, and Mukims Lëpung, Kluwang, and Lui. That of XXVI. into 7, 3, 3, and 4 Mukims, and 3 Mukims Tûnkûp, Mukims Sëlang, Chadi, Kliang, Lambarû, Lamsenong, and Branoh; while the XXII. Mukims, although now including many more districts, were originally composed of 7 and 5 Mukims, and Mukims Indrapura, Tanah Abêh, Lamkabui, Kinaloh, Rûnrûng antûh, Raja Dua, Lamtobah, Lamlaut, and Daya.

The Head of the Sagi has authority over the Heads of the Mukims, and these again have their Wakils or Imâm, who have under them the Këchils, or heads of villages. The Head of a Sagi takes no part in the political administration of the country. He has merely to govern, keep in order, and, in case of war, defend



his own district; he is also bound to furnish the Sultan with men in times of war with his neighbours.

Till within the reign of the last three Sultans, the Suku system prevailed, and the ruler of Acheh always had his Council of four Hulubalangs, aided by eight minor Hulubalangs, &c., the former consisting of persons holding the hereditary titles of Maharaja Mangkû Bûmi, Maharaja Mangkû Bësi, Perdâna Mëntri, and Laksamana Panglima Dalam.

Since these have been done away with, the Sultan, or Raja, has reigned without advisers beyond his Court favourites, and, in their choice of a ruler, the chiefs have been mainly guided by the opinion and advice of the Tûkû Kali, the High Priest.

The coronation generally took place at the Misjid Raja, and the chiefs were expected to remain three days at least at or near Kota Raja after the ceremony of placing the Raja on the Batû Tabek, or coronation stone, as a token of their adherence to the newly chosen prince, the Tûkû Kali being the first to pay him homage. Kota Raja, as it used to exist, exists no longer, it being now a neat civilised military station. Formerly, however, it consisted of a Kota with an inner Kraton or King's Palace (at one time it is said to have contained an extensive harem and some 3,000 Amazons), and surrounded by suburbs, the circumference of which may be roughly taken at eight English miles. It is situated on the left bank of the Acheh river, and has the Krûng Darû running through it and into the Acheh rivers.

This latter is the stream made mention of by Captain BEST, as having had its course diverted, but not to the extent he imagined.

The origin of the people is, without doubt, a strong mixture of Hindû and Malay with the Aborigenes or hill tribes, judging from their type, language, and the fact of their first rulers being Hindûs followed by Malays from Menangkabau, who were either of royal blood, or subsequently connected with royal blood by marriage.

The amount of the population is not known with any certainty, but is generally accepted as one and-a-half million. Though the Malay predominates, we find, however, especially along the coast and at the most frequented ports, the Tamil, Arabic, Hindû, and Nias races, the last named being descendants of the slaves brought in former times from the Nias islands.

In character, the orang Acheh differs very little from the Sumatra Malay, or Malay of the interior of the Peninsula, but being less civilised, and having lived so far in an independent country, he is, if anything, more turbulent, more piratical, more treacherous, less confiding, more demoralised, and, in a word, the greater blackguard of the two. Of course, in making the above comparison, I do not take for my pattern the well behaved Malay one is in the habit of meeting in our Colonies or the more regulated Native States, but I refer to the average Malay such as he was before he came under the influence of civilization; nor, on the other hand, am I characterising an orang Acheh who has long been in contact with European or other traders from the Straits.

*À propos* of their character, I may mention that, not infrequently, a respectable Malay of Sumatra has been known, when giving his son his last advice on starting life, to add :—"Jangan turut tipû orang Acheh."

In figure the men are mostly tall and slim, waisted though often with broad shoulders, while the women are well formed, and would be good looking were they not so hard-worked from their very youth; they become prematurely aged. They further disfigure themselves by wearing huge brooch-shaped earrings requiring the lobes of their ears to be stretched to an unsightly extent.

Both men and women dress soberly, the colours of the *sêleng*, *sarong*, and *sêluar*, which last are peculiarly narrowed at the ends, being generally brown, black, or dark; on high days and holidays, however, you see them wearing a white shirt or jacket

with a gaily coloured handkerchief, generally magenta, either slung over their shoulders or tied round their *topis*.

The men carry with them either a *klewang* (naked blade) or *sekiën panjang* (a straight blade in a sheath hollowed out of one piece of wood), and a *ranchong*, the Malay *badik*; while, when on the war trail, they have the *tombak* or spear, "Brown Bess," or a blunderbuss, about them, and some will carry a shield as well.

In manners and custom they differ in no way from the Malays, it being needless to state that they are Mahomedans, and very fanatic to boot. They keep up all the religious feast days, and observe the ordinances of "Khanduri," when a buffalo, or bullock, as customary, is slaughtered and eaten. Their every day diet, however, is rice, dried fish, and fruit, occasionally varied by goat flesh.

In person, they are, as a rule, far from cleanly, and their houses, which are insignificant, are extremely dirty. These houses are usually grouped in kampongs, each house standing in its own compound, strongly fenced in, and the whole kampong being well palisaded and protected by the bamboo *dúri*. The more important kampong possesses, besides, a *pěkan*, or market place, consisting of an open space or short road flanked by rows of shops under one and the same roof.

The houses stand on piles, and generally consist of three compartments, the front being used as a reception room and shop, the centre, invariably standing a couple of feet or so higher than the front room, being the private sitting and bed room for the family, and the back compartment, which again is lower than the centre room, being used as kitchen, stores, &c. To every kampong there is likewise attached a *balei*, being a shed in which the men toll by day, using it also for holding meetings, and which forms the bed room of the youths and unmarried men by night.

Of their morals, the least said the better, especially as regards the rulers and headmen, whose depravity is glaring. Their favou-

rites, called *sċdalis*, boys from eight to twelve years old, as among the Romans, are trained as *Bayadères*, and as they reach manhood remain attached to the court or household of their owner, being in their turn the teachers of the new favourites, their substitutes.

The people are much given to kidnapping and cattle-lifting, being great adepts at the latter art. One can thus imagine the endless internal wars these propensities were likely to lead them into.

Labour is but unevenly divided between the men and women, the latter having more than their share. The men content themselves with ploughing, fishing and gathering the *nipah* branches destined for atap roofing, while the women have to plant, and gather the padi crop, to stamp it into rice, and to carry the produce to market. You therefore see numbers of women along the road carrying heavy loads on their heads, with which they walk as erect as pillars, in single file, accompanied by boys and girls, who share this labour according to their age and strength, while the men are often found lolling at home. The further you go inland and away from civilisation, the more you see this, but the better class of orang Acheh only allow the women to do the domestic work, such as *tem-boking* padi, and weaving sarongs.

In agriculture the country is not very advanced. Pepper is the chief article cultivated along the East and West Coasts, while betel and a little tobacco form the staple product of the North-East Coast. Acheh Bċsar produces little or nothing for export, its people being more commercial, or being satisfied with cultivating their *sċwah*. Very few States producing pepper grow sufficient padi for their own consumption, and, with the exception of Passangan, and one or two others, none have ever exported rice. Besides these articles, a small quantity of coffee is produced in Acheh Bċsar, and, to a limited extent, culture of silk is carried on here, a wild mulberry being indigenous. The silk, however, is of coarse texture. Mat-making has developed into an art, with these people.

It is in war, however, that they come out strong, for they evidently have acquired knowledge from some more civilised nation, to judge from the clever way they form their entrenched positions and take advantage of the ground for the formation of rifle pits, and bomb-proof underground tunnels, into which they retire when bullets and shells pour in thickly.

The coin universally used is the Carolus dollar or *ringgit* "Meriam," and Straits copper, while at one time their currency consisted of small gold pieces called *derhams* and tiny lead half-cent pieces.

Their ornaments are of silver, or a mixture of gold and copper which they value highly.

Their weights and measures are, for pepper, on the West Coast, as follows:—A bamboo or *hari* of pepper should hold as much as a quantity of rice having a weight equivalent to \$63, (Carolus dollars), while dealing in rice the equivalent weight is only 56 Carolus dollars; 16 of these bamboos go to a *nalih*, and 5 *nalih* to the pikul; or 40 bamboos go to the *tong* or tub, and 2 tubs to the pikul; 40 tubs or 20 pikuls going to the *koyan*. Along the East Coast, 20 *hari* or bamboos go to a tub of pepper, 80 tubs going to the *coyan*. There, and along the North Coast, as regards betelnut, 16 bamboos or *hari* go to a *nalih*, 10 *nalih* to a *kuncha*, 10 *kuncha* to a *koyan*, which generally gave 20 to 23 pikuls. With rice, 40 catties equalled  $1\frac{1}{2}$  *nalih*.

Their language, as will be seen from the few words used in this paper, is fundamentally Malay, with some additional words picked up from their neighbours—the Gayus and Nias—and others they have come into constant contact with. Their dialect, however, is peculiar, the Achinese rolling their words and having the habit of clipping them, so that it is quite impossible for one unacquainted with the language, however conversant he may be with either Sumatran or Straits Malay, to understand them.

I have yet to notice the group of islands North of Acheh, and forming part of Acheh Proper, the largest being Pûlau Way, a pepper producing island, but formerly of more importance from being the place to which criminals were banished. Pûlau Bras and Pûlau Nasi follow next in size, and then we have Long and Stone Islands, the latter supplying the Acheh folks with the soft sand-stone which they use as tomb-stones.

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## ERRATA

TO THE PAPER ENTITLED "ACHEH."

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Page	36,	line	2,	For	Mengaku	read	Mengâku
"	41,	"	25,	"	connected to	"	connected with
"	42,	"	3,	"	Analabce	"	Analabu
"	43,	"	"	"	Tynul Abdin	"	Zainul Abdin
"	45,	"	25,	"	rivers	"	River
"	46,	at end of	the 3rd	para.	add:—"Don't follow the example of the deceitful Achinese." F.A.S.)		
"	46,	line	23,	For	slim, waisted	read	slim-waisted
"	46,	"	26,	should	read thus:—youth. They become prematurely aged, and further they disfigure.		
"	47,	line	2,	After	<i>topis</i>	insert	(Hats.)
"	47,	"	19,	"	<i>dûri</i>	"	(Spike.)
"	47,	"	29,	For	toll	read	loll
"	48,	"	20-21	After	<i>temboking</i>	insert	(pounding)